

No Penalty, No Peare,

IN A
SERMON
Preached at the
ASSIZES
held at
LEICESTER.

August the 10th, 1682.

By Thomas Asbenden, Rector of Dingley
in Northamptonshire.

L O N D O N,

Printed for John Smith in Russel-street, Co-
vent-Garden, 1682.

No Penalty, No Power.

IN A

SERMON

Preached at the

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August the 10th, 1882.

By Thomas Aspinwall, Rector of Dingley
in Northamptonshire.

L O N D O N.

Printed for John Smith in Russell-street, Co-
vent-Garden, 1882.

To the Honourable Richard Roberts, Esq; high Sheriff of the County of Leiceſter, and to the Worſhipful the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury.

Worthy Sirs,

THE Favourable Reception this Diſcourſe generally had at its delivery, and the particular Approbation you all did me, the extraordinary honour to expreſs of it, might perhaps be Arguments to men of a temper different from mine, to aſſect the gratifying themſelves farther in the publication: But I have ſo great and juſt a Conſciouſneſs of my own weakneſs and inability, that truly I had not the leaſt imagination of ſo doing, had not you all Gentlemen in an eſpecial way (uncapable of any denial) laid your commands upon me.

That it appears therefore at all in obedience to you, that it comes abroad ſo ſoon, was one part and preſſure of your Injunctions. And yet it will be impoſſible for me to acquit this haſtineſs of Printing, from unpardonable Levity and Vanity, unleſs you interpoſe your Favour and Authority betwixt me and Cenſure.

For pray let me preſume to ſay, that the following Diſcourſe, now is no longer mine, the Caſe is wholly altered, ſo that what was lately my Sermon is now entirely become your Book.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

These considerations have forced me upon the great hazard of exposing these weak lines to the deliberate and dangerous risk of Ocular Remus, where such faults will be sure to be spied and arraigned, as made a shift (in the late fall and hurry) to escape the notice and censure of your Ear.

However, ~~there is in verbatim~~ the fear is as in delivery; nor have I dared to add or diminish (though even my weak sight discovers many loose joints and abrupt Periods) least I should belye the Title Page.

I shall (I fear) have great need of your Patronage and Protection, to temper and alleviate such Cavils and Calumnies as will be thrown by some unreasonable men of these unbridled headstrong times. Who, if toucht (tho' never so gently) sharpen their (neverberating) tongues like a Serpent, and have Adders poison under their lips, Psal. 140. 3.

I conclude with my most humble thanks for your many honourable Favours to me, and with my hearty Prayers to God to encrease and prosper in you that Pious, Loyal, and Courage, which you so zealously express (as far as in you lies), to advance the Peace and Prosperity of this Church and State. I am

*Honourable Sir, Your most Obedient
Humble Servant,*

For pray let me presume to say, that the following Discourse, now is no longer mine, the Case is wholly altered, so that what was lately my Sermon is now entirely become your Book.

A

SERMON.

JUDGES the XVII. vers. 6.

*In those days there was no King in Israel,
but every man did that which was right in
his own Eys.*

AFTER the lamentable, yet not (altogether) inglorious fall of *Sampson* (in the end of the preceeding Chapter) who sacrificed Three Thousand Philistins to his last rage and revenge, and raised a Monument to his victorious Death out of the ruins of the very Temple of *Dagon* their Idol God; after this famous Prince (who judged *Israel* twenty years) we read of no Judge or Governour in the Land till old *Eli*, 1 *Sam.* 4. 18. though we meet with some occurrences of note, and very remarkable Transactions in this *Interregnum* (as I may call it) or pause of State Government: but yet such as too plainly express the disordered constitution of those times, and strange irregularities of Impiety and In-

B

justice,

Justice, as if all Religion and good Order did immediately vanish upon the cessation of the civil Government, of which misdemeanours the Chapter of my Text begins with one, and that of no trivial concern, you have the Narrative of it in the five verses before my Text; And 'tis how that *Micah* and his Idolatrous Mother contrived the making of a graven Image, and a molten Image, and they were kept in *Micah's* House, vers. 4. and to denote the unlimited extravagance of this superstitious humour, 'tis said in the verse afore my Text, and the man *Micah* had an house of gods, and made an Ephod and Teraphim, and Consecrated one of his Sons who became his Priest: But here the words of my Text forthwith interpose, and by way of serious reflection on such disorderly proceedings, and to suggest plainly to us the cause and occasion of the foregoing Idolatry, it tells us that 'in those loose and irregular times, *there was no King in Israel*, no supreme Power to restrain such Enormities, and therefore no better could be expected, then that *every man should do what was right in his own Eyes*; when there was no legal restraint to the contrary, no civil Power to oblige men to a strict observance of the standing Rule and Form of the Mosaick Law. But least I should seem to take too large and unwarrantable a Liberty with the words of my Text, and to force more from it in conclusion than it will fairly bear, (for the sum of my present Discourse will be to prove that where there is no exercise or exertion of civil Power in penalties for offences, there is little or no likelihood of Peace either in Church or State) least my Text, I say, should

should seem to weak a foundation for this super-structure ; since it seems to point at the matter of false Religion only , or mistakes in Divine Worship ; I will by your leave draw in one or two neighbouring parallel Texts to its assistance, and to my own in the handling of it. You have heard already what happened in *Micha's* case, how great and gross Idolatry he and his Mother were guilty of ; the occasion of which my Text doth palpably assign to the intermission of State-Government in those days, or because *there was no King in Israel*. Every man for want of a coercive Guide in the right and rational Worship of the Deity, was misled by his own private fancy and fond humour into false Worship and Irreligion, which yet seemed *right to him in his own Eyes*, though in its self most abominably Idolatrous. This happened in matters Ecclesiastical for want of a restraining Power, or a strict coercive Guide and Governour in things Divine ; *In those days there was no King in Israel*, and consequently every man drew his Religion by the model and platform of his particular opinion. But the mischievous consequence of the want of a King or supreme Governour ended not here, for it hath been not seldom observed that the ruin of a Nation begins with a corruption or neglect of Divine Worship, and therefore as this People the Jews were misled by their own private fancies in matters of Worship for defect of a Governour ; so for the same reason they lapsed into all extremities of Pride and Cruelty, Violence and Rapine, Lust and Injustice, in matters Political, or in their behaviour and carriage one towards another ; having no King to keep them within the bounds

of the first Table, and to oblige them to a right and strict Worship of God, they forthwith stuck at nothing; but without remorse or regard broke through all the prohibitions of the second. The Chapter immediately following that of my Text, begins with these very words, *in those days there was no King in Israel*: Prefacing (as it were) the Violence and Injustice the Danites there offered to this same *Micah* in Plundering his House, with this cause and occasion thereof, *viz.* this was done because *there was no King in Israel*, to restrain and punish such Enormities. Again, the nineteenth Chapter begins with the same words, and it came to pass in those days when *there was no King in Israel*, and so forth, where you may read a dismal relation of a horrid Rape and Murder committed at once upon the Body of a Levites Concubine; the reason of all these and the like flagitious outrages is affixed (as I told you) by the first verse of the nineteenth Chapter, to the being of *no King in Israel*.

This short *Prooemium*, as it doth in little display to your quick sagacity a prospect of my ensuing Discourse, so I hope it hath removed some rubs in my way, whereby my progress might have been less plain and intelligible.

My Text then doth easily seem to me to furnish us with these Four Propositions; First, That in matters of Religion and Worship, many things may seem right to men in their own Eyes, which in their own Nature are quite otherwise.

Secondly

(9)

Secondly, That Errors and Abuses of this kind fall under the Cognizance and Correction of the Civil Magistrate.

Thirdly, That 'tis no just Plea of Exemption from Punishment, for men to alledge, that they follow their Conscience, or (as my Text hath it) *do what is right in their own Eyes.*

Fourthly, That in matters Political, without Temporal Restraints and Punishments for breaches of the Second Table, all Civil Societies would be destroyed, and all things run into Desolation and Confusion.

First, I say that in matters, &c. 'Tis a strange and surprizing thing seriously to consider that Truth which is the natural and adequate Object of our Understanding, should have so few Adherents, especially when we consider that it shines by no mutatisious Light, that it utterly disowns all false *sear* and puzzling disguises, presenting it self (unless it be our fault) always in its own simple beauty plain and naked to the Intellect : and on the contrary, that its Mimick Error, which dare never appear bare-faced, nor by its own name, but is forced to steal false *Vizards*, Disguises and Mock-truths, to insinuate and recommend it self, 'tis strange, I say, that Error and Mistake, which is always forced to borrow some faint Aures and gloomy Shades from Truth, should pass for the real Substance, whereas the true and native Beauty of Verity affects us very coldly, and is too often glanced over unregarded. We become easily enamour'd of Cheat and De-
lusion,

Men, but are dull and insensible of the Beauty of Holiness; as the Scripture Phrases it. 2 Chron. 20. 21. 'Tis so, and as *Laban* the subtle Syrian jugged the blear-eyed *Leah* into *Jacobs* Bed, instead of the Beautiful and well favoured *Rachel*; so the Devil doth ingage the greatest part of men in the Embraces of Error; of all whom, I fear very few are undeceiv'd by the dawning Light, and like *Jacob* find their mistake in the Morning; they die in Delusion.

Religion, or the right knowledge and adoration of the Almighty sprang up with Man in the very Morning of his Creation, and the Laws of both Tables (whose Original, tis true, was kept in the Archives of Eternity) were Engraven in the heart of Man, and Woven into the very Principles of his Essence in more lively and durable Characters than those Engraven by the finger of God in the Tables of stone; in a word, the Notions of Piety and Justice, as they were plain, so were they indeleble; And this Satan the Enemy of Mankind quickly observ'd, he knew (and concluded) that if no stop were interpos'd, no Amusement, Diversion or Delusion presented to draw Mankind out of this plain and right Road of true Religion, it would by necessary consequence conduce them to Happiness. To Eradicate the Notion of a Deity he thought was impracticable, he was resolv'd therefore to blur, deface and confuse Mens Conceptions of the Godhead; and in effect, by this means he concluded more mischief might be done, than by fruitless Attempts of absolute Atheism. Accordingly by little and little he drils Men off from a Spiritual and Reasonable Service of the invisible God; by degrees

grees he materializes their Conception of him, as well as sensualizes their Inclinations and Affections; so that instead of one true God, he Enslaves them to himself, and to the whole Creation; no Object so Vile and Contemptible, no Worship so Cruel, Servile and Ridiculous, but they bow and stoop to it, after the Devil had once stamp'd it with the false mark of a God and Religion, *Oppida tota Canem venerantur*, &c. *Juven. Sat. 15.* Thus they turned the Glory of God into the similitude of an Ox that eateth Hay, saith the Royal *Psalmist*. When they had once left the right way they wandred in a Thousand Errors and Mazes of false Worship, when they had forsaken the reasonable Service of the true God, they were Engaged in Abominations without number; they Worship'd their own handy-work, Stocks and Stones, they Ador'd the Hosts of Heaven, and the Gods of every Nation; and those self same Persons that grumbled at God's easie and equal Service, and thought it much to walk mournfully before the Lord of Hosts, *Malach. 3. 14* these very Men and Women cou'd yet without grief or regret Sacrifice their Sons and their Daughters by Fire unto Devils, *2 Chron. 33. 6.* & *2 Kings 17. 17, 18.* And this horrid piece of unnatural hellish Religion cou'd seem right in those Eyes, that cou'd not drop a Tear at the dreadful sight and loud cries of their burning Babes.

Thus in the days of old, Religion was aped and falsified in a Thousand ridiculous shapes and misrepresentations, and was drawn by the Devils own hand with such particular glances and allurements, as the humor

mor of the times; the tendencies of Mens debauch'd Fancies; and his own designs required; innumerable diversities and mock shapes of Worship deluded poor Mortals, the true Religion all the while being oppress'd and cover'd under the nasty Rubbish of Idolatry and Superstition.

But to draw my reflections into a narrower compass, and to be more particular and pertinent to my purpose; the Devil did not only heretofore confound the genuine Worship of the Deity, with several mock shews and vain pageantry of Religion: but he continued to play the same game still after the appearance of Christianity, by broaching Heresies and Scisms of all sorts, and by sowing Tares amongst the Wheat; which he hath done with such fatal success, that it being now Seventeen Hundred Years (very near) since Christianity was promulgated, and not much less since the true model and platform of it (the New Testament I mean) was delivered to us, to be forever the Archetipe Rule and Standard of Faith and Practice; yet, from this plain and uniform model designed for the help and rule of our Edification, have in all Ages been drawn by the warm Fancies of busie Enthusiasts, and the like, such monstrous Medlies, and odd Landskips of Opinions, as (in another kind) the most extravagant conceits of Poets and Painters have never equal'd; and truly I think one and the other have some grounds much alike for their Whimsies, I am sure they have each of them had too much of one Privilege, and that is the *Quidlibet Audendi Potesas*. Hor. de Art. Poet.

But

But to come nearer home still, what makes so many poor deluded Souls in these distracted Kingdoms despise the Establish'd Religion, stamp'd with the Authority of Divine and Humane Laws, and instead of it grow so zealously fond of Seditious Noise and Soothing Nonsense? How patiently can Men Weekly trudge (far above a Sabbath Days Journey) to hear the voice of a stranger, so called by our Sa-
vior. *John 5.*

Why shoud they so readily and freely give their Money for that which is not Bread, as the Prophet complains, *Isa. 5.*

When they have Wine and Milk at home; when the Word is Preached agreeable to Christs Gospel at their own Door, purely and sincerely, constantly and carefully, zealously and devoutly? Why shoud so many of our Country-men be impos'd upon, contrary to the pious usage of our Fore-fathers, their own Duty, and the known Laws of the Land, to leave the Assembling themselves together, to forsake the Communion of Saints, and follow after Novelty and New-fangledness? *1, 2.*

What forcible Cause is it that perswades them to go through Deserts where there lies no way, but the way of the Lord have they not known, as the Wise Man saith. *Wis. 2.*

What makes the rough and rugged, the cross and crooked way of Schism and Sedition seem right to 'em in their own Eyes, leaving the pleasant ways and peaceable paths of Truth and Wisdom, as Solomon calls 'em? *7.*

Why shou'd Quirks and Cavils, Difficulties and Obscurities, Niceties and Novelties, Faction and Fancy, prevail more with them, than the Reasonable Plainness of the Established Religion, than the Security and Perspicuity of *the good old way*? what
 hes. 2. could send 'em such strong Delusion, that they shou'd so stedfastly believe a Lie.

To speak here of the distant and more remote Causes of our Divisions, to shew the first springs and wheels of our Dissention, how they are hammer'd out by dark and deep Engenteers invisibly, and made to work slyly and insensibly upon such as are to be Implements and Properties upon occasion, and to do the work of Ambitious and Factious Statists; to declare to you the several subtle Agents and Emisaries that cooperate in this business, to tell you the Methods and Machinations, the Tricks and Intrigues, the Devices and Designs, the Intent and End of their Mission; to shew you how that these Artists can make any thing appear as they gloss it, so that what they please shall seem right in the Eyes of the deluded; in a word, how they induce the Credulous to use Christian Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciousness, as saith the Apostle.

1 Pet. 2.
 16.

To declare, I say, all this, belongs rather to a Political Tract, than a Discourse of this Place and Nature.

I will now rather content my self with the adjacent and more apparent Causes of our present Divisions, and I shall trouble you no farther, than with the bare naming of such Inveaglements as make the
 several

(II)

Several Modes of Religion and false Worship in these our Days, seem right in the Eyes of the Superstitious and Seditious.

The First general Cause I take to be, Ignorance and Simplicity on the one side, and Hypocrisy and Subtlety on the other, I mean the Insinuations of the pretended Teachers, which were long since described by *St. Paul*, in the Third Chapter of his Second Epistle to *Timothy*, the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Verses, where he tells us, That they are Traytors and Heady, that they have a form of Godliness, but deny the Power thereof, that they creep into Houses, and lead Captive silly Women, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth. In which words (if we observe the behavior of our Modern Canting Hold-forths) we have their picture and posture so exactly described, that unless the Apostle should have named them all severally by their names, they could not have been pointed at more directly.

A Second Cause may be, Easiness and Credulity, which is accordingly work'd upon by these sly Factors that Trade in our Conventicles: They know very well that the Affections and Passions of silly Men and Women (as they are more easily stirred, so they) touch more sensibly, and operate in their motion more violently than rational Conviction and calm Persuasion; and herein lies the great Cheat of Canting Whining Applications; they produce very sensible and passionate Emotions in a soft and easy Auditory; and this forsooth, and this alone must be

the operation of Gods Word and Spirit, this is Edification, this is the Power of God unto Salvation; when as alas, all this pathetick Noise and moving Gestures of the cunning Speaker, never passed farther then the lower Region of the Passions, never reach'd the Seat of the Reason and Understanding of such as hear them.

A Third Cause of these pleasing and plausible mistakes in matters of Religious Worship, is a miserable wresting and distorting of Scripture, such places more especially, as being simply taken without relation to the Occasion or Context, seem plainly to speak the sense of these People. Now these places out of Gods Word being dextrously timed and apply'd by cunning Crafts-men to Factious and Superstitious Fancies, already tainted and infected, river the Delusion irreversibly in the crasse opinion of the Brain-sick-Party, of this St. Peter complains in the Third Chapter of his Second Epistle, Verse Sixteen, telling us that Men unlearned and unstable do wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction.

A Fourth, And a very Powerful Cause to make any sort of Religious Worship seem right in Mens own Eyes, is Prejudice; which hath several Branches and Divisions, yet it may be described in general to be, a fond and foolish Resolution to be one way alone in the right, right or wrong.

There is a Prejudice of Birth and Education, which possesses some so violently with the opinion of their Fore-fathers, that a Man would think they received a tincture in their very Generation, and grew of their Parents Sect. *To*

(173)

To conclude this point, Religious Prejudice is sometimes Interest and Worldly Delight, sometimes Custom, sometimes Passion, sometimes Vanity and Ambition to lead a Faction, and govern the Crowd; sometimes 'tis Shame and a disingenuous Reluctancy to acknowledge our mistakes, lest by so doing we should give our Father, our Selves and the whole Party the Lie, sometimes 'tis meer Fancy and Humor, and not seldom 'tis Malice, with a Perverseness and Obstinacy that confirms us in false Worship and Superstition.

Lastly, As great a Cause as any of the above mentioned, to Create Divisions and Factions in Church or State, is Toleration, Liberty, and Impunity, and indeed the Text takes notice of no other, as if, this alone were of it self sufficient to occasion diversities of Worship, viz. The Cessation of Civil Power and Punishment; for when Men may do any thing that they think right, they will go near to think any thing right, and this brings me to my Second Observation, viz.

Secondly, That Errors and Misdemeanors in matters of Religion, fall under the Cognizance and Correction of the Civil Magistrate: This is plainly suggested in my Text, that it needs no further demonstration, for it was, because there was no King in Israel, that Micah ventured upon such gross Idolatry, and it was Liberty and Impunity that rendered it all right in his own Eyes, in those Days, &c. That Kings and Princes had the Care of both Tables

and that they are therefore Supreme Supervizors and Governors in matters pertaining to Religion, is Evident, and that they Ordered and Regulated in Ecclesiastick, as well as Secular Causes, appears in the History of *Moses, Joshua, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah* &c. Besides, we read every where, that Gods Word and Message concerning Religion and Worship was always directed to Kings and Princes by his Messengers the Prophets: they were commanded to cut down the Groves, to break down the Images, and Altars of Idols, to take away abuses and corruptions in Religion, and the like, and they accordingly Govern'd the Priests, ordered their Courts, removed the Ark from place to place, commanded the Priests to read the Book of the Law, and to reduce things to a conformity with it. &c.

Moreover, the Prophet *Isaiah* saith, Prophecying of the Church in the Evangelical times, That Kings and Queens are Fosterers and Nurles of the Church.

1/a. 19.
23. &c
60. 16.

And in the primitive and purest times of Christianity, the Christian Emperours did not only appoint the general Councils of the Bishops, but the good Emperour *Constantine* (though a temporal Prince) thought it no sacrilegious encroachment, no sin of *Uzziah*, to judge in Causes Ecclesiastical, as he did between the *Donatians* and *Catholicks*.

2 Cro.
26. 16.

And farther, as if this spiritual supremacy were not only a Divine Right, but a natural positive privilege of Kings, *Aristotle* tells us *Banau's* ἡ πόλις ἡ δὲ δὴς ἡ πόλις. The King is Lord and Ruler in

Politic.
lib. 3.

in things that appertain to the Gods. Tis true, that our profest Enemies of the Papal and Presbyterian Faction, are violent opposers of these assertions; their Pride and Ambition will allow of no Rival or Competitour, much less a supreme Governour in Ecclesiastick affairs; they wholly engross the Monarchy of the Church; and exclude temporal Princes from interposing there, that they may with greater ease enslave the State, and tyrannize over our Souls, Bodies, and Estates, with the old plausible cheat of *in ordine ad spiritualia*.

But surely temporal Princes are grown wise enough (by this time of day) to discover the old Imposture, and to assert their Royal Prerogative in this point, against the subtle, and equally dangerous encroachments Both of Pope and Presbyter. For not a few Princes have found to their cost by fatal experience; that spiritual and secular supremacy are inseparable, like twins they are born and bred together, and have always been found to sympathize so far, that the one being extinct, the other doth not long survive. Let Princes be but once baffled out of their Ecclesiastical Superiority, and 'twill not be long ere they will be trampled upon from Rome (as once Pope Alexander served the Emperour) with the prophane insulting insolence of *super aspiciem calcabis & basileum*; which our Phanatick Reformers in the late Tragick times thus Englished, To bind their Kings in Chains, and their Nobles in Fetters of Iron, such honour have all his Saints.

But to proceed the reformation of abuses in Religion, hath been proved from Scripture, and the usage and consent of the primitive Church to belong to the civil Power; though much more might be said. And 'tis not only the respective Duty of Kings, if they regard the Glory of God (whose Ministers they are) but 'tis also their nearest interest and especial concern, if they value the honour and safety of their own regality, to prevent the rise and growth of divisions and dissensions in Religion, and to oppose and crush the propagation of false Doctrine, Heresie, and Scism, which (sooner or later) never fail to hatch and engender Sedition, privy Conspiracy and Rebellion. Too late, and too clear Proofs evince the truth of this.

Alas, 'tis neither the Priest nor the Prophet can stop the broaching and running on of Scism and Faction, nor hinder the fatal mischiefs that flow from separations in Religious Worship, without the execution of penal Laws, without the effectual interposition of the temporal Sword. If Disputing, Warring, or Preaching, could have effected any thing, 'tis most probable that all our late distractions and present divisions, had been cured and convinced, as well as baffled and confuted; *si pergamæ dextera*, &c. No, not the perverse heretical Spirit that agitated in the first ages of Christianity, worketh yet still in the Children of disobedience. And when good and learned men offer as a Cure by publick Writing and Dispute, the fruitless consequence shews plainly that the wrong remedy is applied, the malady lying more

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in the Perverseness of the will than the mistake of the Intellect: And for this cause demonstration in itself often fails of conviction, and the strongest and plainest truths urged home to Scismaticks, stay not: but are sent back in a faint retort, stuff more with weak evasions, and peevish cavil than right or reason. Whence 'tis apparent that Hypocrisy and Subtlety, Arrogancy and Obstinacy, not Reason or Judgment hold the Cudgels; 'Tis in vain therefore to hope that the strongest and most zealous Arguments will ever reduce Scism and Faction to an amicable compliance, since their pride always forearms them with a resolution to demur at demonstration, and cavil at conviction. 'Tis the *Argumentum bacillatum* (must do the work, no demonstration so convincing as that of a Penal Statute, no perswasion so pressing as that of a legal mulct. At least the example and reverence the Power and Presence of the temporal Prince, is necessary (next to Gods Grace), to the maintenance of true Religion and regular Worship. Nay the very presence alone of the Supreme Magistrate, and the awe of his personal appearance amongst the people, is of it self very often the confirmation, encouragement, and life of Religion: *A King sitting in the Throne of Judgment, scattereth away all evil with his Eyes*; Prov. 20. 8. *When people are not engaged and poisd by the reverential awe and dread of their Superiors Person and Power, but are Idle, Loose, and at Liberty; it hath been observed that the first degree of Innovation and Faction hath been a Tinkering with their*

own Fancies about points of Religion, hammering out strange gods, and fondly forging new modes of Worship. We have a notable proof and instance of this in the 12th Chapter of *Exodus*, where the chiefest occasion of that abominable idolatry of the molten Calf, was the Peoples impatience of *Moses* delay and stay in the Mount, his only absence let their superstitious inclinations in a new ferment; and as in even Religion it self were blown away and departed in the Person of *Moses*, they set upon *Aaron* with this tumultuous exclamation, come make us Gods, for as for this *Moses* we wot not what is become of him. This People however (by the way) shewed more modesty and obedience than our modern Sectaries; for in the absence of the Civil Magistrate, they appeal to the High Priest for a Religion, whereas our Factious Dissenters will neither follow the Religion of Prince nor Priest.

Thirdly, The third Proposition imply'd in my Text is, That, 'tis no just plea of exemption from punishment, for men to alledge that they follow their Conscience; or (as my Text hath it) *do what is right in their own Eyes*. For if the Profession and Practice of the Christian Religion, as 'tis now by Law Established, is no farther obligatory than as it hits and suits the private Conscience of each particular man; the consequence is clear, and matter of Fact hath too lately convinc'd us that a Torrent and Inundation of Irreligion, Libertinism, and Atheism, will certainly ensue. This hath been (as I said) too evident from Fact it self, (the highe

conviction) in our late deplorable confusions, nor
 doth it want its notions, and speculative demonstra-
 tion too; for if private Conscience (so called) be
 in some men mere humour and whimie, in many in-
 terest, Mallice and Passion, in most men ignorance,
 Custom and Prejudice; what a monstrous medley
 of mischiefs must private Conscience necessarily pro-
 duce, when she is impregnate with such a lewd in-
 ter, such a pernicious viperous brood? Besides, This
 destructive Principle sets up a Tribunal in every pri-
 vate mans factious fancy (for though I have a re-
 vered regard to the thing Conscience, yet I can allow
 it no better a name in the sense we now mention)
 and makes the Authority of Heaven and Earth, and
 the Wisdom and Laws of a whole Nation to be of
 no effect, force or value, till they are sign'd and
 seal'd by the humouristom approbation of every sedi-
 tious crazy Enthusiast, it inverts the whole Course
 of Nature, and the reason of things; it lays the
 Law at the Feet and Mercy of the offender, and
 exalts the Felon to the Seat of the Judge; For there
 can be no whimsies so ridiculous, no conceptions so
 monstrous, no tenets so blasphemous, no practices so
 mischievous, but will take sanctuary here, and plead
 a little to impunity under pretence of this Liberty
 of Conscience, which cannot in short be better de-
 scribed than as the Poet expresses *Poliphemus* his mon-
 strum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum,
 I am sure it hath proved as blind and bloody.

D.

For

For to mince the matter no longer, but to speak the naked truth, all this doleful noyse of scruple and tenderness, all the quereimonious clamour is of a Nature quite contrary to what it appears, and the Arguings and Disputings of our Sectaries (in plain terms) is not for Truth but for Dominion; like expert and cunning Commanders, they amuse and divert us with dilatory, Treat, and Capitulation, till they can handsomly make head, and once again draw their Forces into the Field of Battle. Their voice is *Jacobs* voice, but their hands are the hands of *Esau*.

Undoubtedly we may thank our selves for the edge and keenness of our present divisions, and our manifold menacing mischiefs we may chiefly date from the late Toleration; such allowances proceed from Royal mercy and tenderness, tis true, but the dangers that always ensue are innumerable and grow to a formidable stature by insensible degrees, till at length they suck themselves into a Stare and Habit, strong enough for Rebellion, even from the Breasts of Royal Indulgence.

If the good and wholesome Acts of Uniformity had been applied without remission, we should by this time have found mens purges more tender than their Consciences; at least I would have done so much good, that the old *Pique* had been buried with this Generation, and the next would have conformed of Course; whereas I fear the late long Impunity hath fixt the contagion in the very Vitals of our dissent-

dissenting Brethren, and their Children will be tainted *ex traduce*.

Nay farther, There is a more mischievous consequence still from such grants of Liberty in Religious Worship, and we suffer the same Judgment the Israelites did, in permitting the Canaanites to dwell among them, *wz*. Many even of us have been inticed to go a whoring after their Gods, and as the Angel told the People at *Bochim*; *They are left to be Thorns in our sides*, Judg. 2. 3.

And yet I would not willingly be mistaken in this part of my Discourse neither, as if I hinted at a tyrannical and cruel Inquisition; I declare that I urge no unnatural force or usurpation over the Opinions and thoughts of men, nor would I fetter or shackle the understanding (which is undoubtedly in Nature as free as the Will) much less would I commit a Rape upon a truly tender and modest Conscience; or like the cruel Romanists, force a blind obedience upon any man: For, (as a worthy Divine saith) 'Our Church is not against any mans seeing spiritual truths with his own Eyes, only we would not have the blind presume to teach others to see, we would not have men think they see when they do not, which is the most certain way for them never to see at all.'

Our Church by applying the soft and gentle remedies of statutable Punishments, never intended to force.

force gross blindness, or impose the tyranny of implicit faith upon any man, but rather the quite contrary, she carefully and wisely considered that a little smart might make the scales peel off from mens Eyes, and by some little bitterness she designs no more harm to them, than *Tobias* did to his old Father, by throwing gall in his Eyes to make him see.

It is (to conclude this point) extremely admirable and incomprehensible to me, that so many of our Countrey-men should out of an odd peevish humour, and most unaccountable Caprice, forsake that sober decent way of Worship, which the established law presses, which their gracious king and governour himself strictly observes, together with the Loyal Nobility, Magistracy, and Gentry, and the most reverend and learned Clergy of this Land, that they should, I say, leave these good, these great, these wise Examples, contrary to the obedient humble temper of Christians, contrary to the Prudence and Interest of rational men, and contrary to the honest good Nature of true English-men: and all this out of a blind and ignorant compliance to the insinuating hypocritical perswasions of a few leading Prejudiced Presbyters: For true scruple of Conscience cannot be said to urge them to this nonconformity: not one of five hundred understanding the intrinsic State of the debate, any more than they doe *Arabick*: but granting that they could plead Christian scruple, how far would even that fall short of Justification, Seing that the commands to Obedience

dience are so absolute, so plain, so positive, and the preferences for Separation (even at best) so obscure, so weak, so dubious.

In a word, The Faith of our Nonconformists is as blind and implicate as that of the Papists; the design of their Doctrines as subtle, sensual and secular.

Fourthly, and Lastly, My last Observation is, That without Legal Severities, and Temporal Punishments of Secular or Political Misdemeanors, all Societies wou'd run the unavoidable danger of Confusion and Dissolution. The horrid outrages, and most flagitious Villanies of Robbery and Plunder, of Rape and Murder, which the Two next Chapters after that of my Text tell the lamentable Story of, these Villanies I say are prefaced (as it were) *in limine*, at the first Entrance of their Narration, with half my Text *In those Days there was no King in Israel*: which inter to those dismal Stories hints plainly to us the occasion of the low, looseness of those abominable Times!

We all know, and freely grant, ('tis true) that Propositions about right and wrong, just and unjust, are as little liable to dispute and contest, and less subject to doubt and difficulty, than Mathematical Theorems and Conclusions; for though they also are acknowledged to be Truths of Eternal date, though their Evidency is Evinc'd with much pomp and state of formal demonstration, yet without all doubt,

doubt, Moral Truths do most justly challenge the Precedence, as more easily clear, and with less trouble, demonstrable; or rather, the truth and surety of them is of such a Nature as less needs a demonstration; besides our natural impressions of Justice, and its contrary, are less obnoxious to Errors and mistakes, and oversights, (than Geometrical Principles) they command universal assent, and assault our radical Reason so forcibly, as that the bare mentioning of these Moral Truths is of it self irresistible proof, and without farther delay or dispute, they themselves are their own demonstration.

In a word, All Sects of Philosophers in all Ages have joyn'd Issue here; however they have in all things else thwarted each other, and there hath been a general concurrence of all Mankind, as to the common notions of Vertue and Justice: Here the *Exotic* and *Argemone* of the Platonicks ceaseth, and freely owns, that there are some undoubted facts truths in Morality: and in this case the rigid Stoicks break the bands of Fate and Necessity, and acknowledge that here there is *αὐτὴν τὴν αἰσθησιν*. And, as to this affair, *Aristotle* (who will hardly allow any Man but himself in the right) doth willingly shake hands with *Socrates* and the Moralists: *Adeo illud ratum certumque est quod honestum*, as one saith.

But for all this, notwithstanding our conceptions of Justice and Vertue are confessedly true, and
 univer-

universally so, yet they would all prove in effect but
 naked Notions, fruitless Speculations, and vain
 Ideas, without the awful terror of the *Falces* and *Se-
 curis*, without the enforcement of the Civil Magi-
 strate, without the interposal of the Temporal
 Sword. And most undoubtedly, without these, that
 radical rule of Justice I tell, that highest and most
 fixt truth in Nature, *Quid tibi fieri non vis alteri ne
 feceris*, even this would as rarely and difficultly ap-
 pear in real Fact and Experiment, as the Philosophers
 Stone, or the admired Phoenix, would I fear, be the highest
 pitch of practical Morality, without the mediation
 of legal Punishments of all sorts.

Not that I here silly suggest, as if the Essence and
 Obligation of Justice and Virtue had no other Being,
 no stronger a Foundation, no longer a date, than
 that of positive Laws, and humane constitutions,
 God forbid.

But I mean (in a word) that such is the gene-
 ral corruption of humane Nature, so pressing are the
 present allurements of Profit and Pleasure, of Pride
 and Ambition; so forcible are the suggestions of Po-
 verty, Malice and Revenge; so distant are the Fears
 and Threats of the other World, and so Easing and
 Encouraging are the thoughts of Impunity here,
 that were it not more for fear of Temporal Dis-
 grace and Punishment, than for any future Terrors.

of Ruin hereafter, the World would become a Den
of Bears and Tygers; and without doubt, Man
would be (in the late I speak of) *Non solum lupus
sed demon homini.*

In fine, I am inclined to think, that most Men
dread the Presence of a Temporal Judg, more than
they do the Appearance of the Lord of Hosts; that
a Day of Assizes here on Earth strikes a greater hor-
ror in many, than the thoughts of the most dread-
ful Day of Judgment, and that the fear and shame
of a Branding-Iron had kept more Men Honest and
Just, than the apprehensions of Everlasting Burnings,
From which, good Lord deliver us.

I will conclude all in desiring your Prayers to
God with me, That he would so rule the heart of
his chosen Servant *Charles* our King and Governor,
that he (knowing whose Minister he is) may
above all things seek God's Honor and Glory, and
that we and all his Subjects (duly considering whose
Authority he hath) may faithfully serve, honor
and humbly Obey him, according to his Blessed
Word and Ordinance: And that our Almighty Fa-
ther would be pleased to bless and keep all the Ma-
gistrates and Judges of this Land, giving them grace
to Execute Justice, and to maintain Truth. The
Grace, &c.

E I N I S.

